DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 209 587 CG 015 540

AUTHOR Kreutzer, Jeffrey S.; And Others
TITLE Alcohol Consumption and Responsibility Judgment for Rape.
PUB DATE Apr 81
NOTE 11p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Midwestern Psychological Association (53rd, Detroit, MI, April 30-May 2, 1981). Tables are of marginal legibility.

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Aggression; Alcoholic Beverages; *Antisocial Behavior; *Attribution Theory; Behavior Patterns; Crime; *Drinking; *Rape; *Responsibility; Sex Differences; *Victims of Crime; Violence
IDENTIFIERS *Blame

ABSTRACT

One explanation for the positive relationship between alcohol consumption and violent crime considers alcohol consumption to be a socially accepted excuse for otherwise inappropriate behaviors. A policy capturing methodology was used to examine judgments of responsibility for rape. Male (N=30) and female (N=66) undergraduates received 40 profiles of alleged rapes with variations in 9 information categories. Subjects rated assailant and victim responsibility, degree of sanction appropriate for the assailant, and victim willingness to participate. No significant sex differences occurred between mean judgments of victim responsibility, assailant responsibility, or victim willingness. In terms of sanctions for the assailant, females assigned lengthier sentences than males. All subjects rated assailants as more responsible than victims; both the rapist and the victim were held more responsible if they had been drinking. No significant sex differences occurred in the patterns of cue utilization. Subjects showed a bias toward blaming the victim; the best predictor of judgments was the victim's alcohol consumption. Other salient predictors were the extent to which the victim had been threatened and the reputation of the assailant. Degree of victim resistance was the least effective predictor. Results suggest that drinkers are held more, rather than less, responsible for aggressive behaviors. (NRB)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED209587

Alcohol Consumption and Responsibility Judgment for Rape

Jeffrey S. Kreutzer, Pamela K. Thompson, Clifford R. Mynatt, & Lee M. Markowitz

Bowling Green State University

Midwestern Psychological Association

April 1981

CG 015540

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

X This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.

Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official NIE position or policy.

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

Jeffrey Kreutzer

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

Abstract

A policy capturing methodology was used to determine how judgments of responsibility for rape are made. The major finding was that the rapist and his victim were held more responsible if they had consumed alcohol immediately prior to the incident. Analyses of subjects' policies indicated a bias toward blaming the victim; surprisingly, these biases were held by both male and female subjects. Future research should attempt to discern the role of stereotypes and cultural myths in the determination of these biases.

There is little doubt that there is a positive relationship between alcohol consumption and violent crime. In a recent report to the United States Congress (Nobel, 1978), it was estimated that as many as 72% of robbery offenders, 86% of homicide offenders, 72% of assault offenders, 50% of sex offenders, and 31% of rape victims had consumed alcohol prior to their involvement in the crime. Sobell and Sobell (1973) have attempted to explain this phenomenon by suggesting that alcohol consumption is a socially accepted excuse for behaviors which would otherwise be deemed inappropriate. They indicate that members of society are more likely to tolerate aggressive behaviors from an individual who is drunk than from one who is sober.

Surprisingly, there has been little direct investigation of this hypothesis. Kreutzer, Mynatt, & Markowitz (1980) recently completed an investigation in which they obtained results inconsistent with the Sobells' hypothesis. A majority of their subjects attributed greater responsibility and recommended a longer sentence for assault offenders who had consumed alcohol prior to commiting a hypothetical crime. The purpose of the present study was to extend earlier findings (Kreutzer et al., 1980) and to determine how information about alcohol consumption would affect responsibility judgments for rape. Because rape studies have focused primarily on the victim, we were interested in judgments concerning the responsibility of both the victim and the assailant. For example, research by Scroggs (1976) suggests that the victim's degree of resistance and subsequent pregnancy affects subjects' judgments of the victim's responsibility. Do these factors also influence perceptions of the

assailant's responsibility? Thus, we were interested in how the above factors and other relevant information (e.g., location of attack, threat to victim) influence perceptions of the victim and assailant.

Procedure

Sixty-six female and 30 male undergraduates were given descriptions of alleged rapes. A "policy-capturing" methodology (Arkkelin, Oakley, & Mynatt, 1979) was employed in which each subject received 40 different profiles with variations in nine categories of information or "cues" (see Table 1). After reading each profile, subjects were asked to rate: (1) assailant responsibility for the incident; (2) victim responsibility for the incident; (3) degree of sanction (prison sentence) the assailant should receive; and (4) the extent to which the victim was a willing participant. Responsibility ratings were made on a seven-point scale ranging from 1, not at all responsible, to 7, completely responsible. Sanction ratings ranged from 1, indicating the alleged rapist should get an extremely light sentence, to 7, indicating an extremely heavy sentence. Subjects rated the victim's willingness on another scale, ranging from 1, completely unwilling, to 7, completely willing.

The "policy-capturing" methodology, based on Brunswik's (1952) lens model paradigm, has been used extensively in human judgment research. This methodology, when used in conjunction with multiple regression techniques, allows a quantitative evaluation of how information in utilized and combined by subjects to arrive at a judgment "policy." Based on R^2 change

values, the researcher can determine the relative weight appropriated to each cue in making judgments. Examination of correlational data (Beta weights) provided information about the directionality of the cue/judgment relationships.

Results

A comparison of the judgment policies of male and female subjects was first made. A series of four univariate analyses of variance were implemented; the means of each of the subject's four ratings on the forty profiles served as dependent measures in these analyses. There were no significant sex differences ($p > .05$) obtained between mean judgments of victim responsibility, assailant responsibility, or victim willingness. There were, however, significant differences in assigning sanction to the assailant. Female subjects tended to assign lengthier sentences than male counterparts ($F_{1,}$ = 7.3, $p < .01$). The mean sentence assigned by females was 4.68, whereas, the mean for male subjects was 4.06. As might be expected, all subjects, regardless of sex, rated the alleged assailant as more responsible ($\bar{X}$ = 5.26) than the alleged victim ($\bar{X}$ = 3.67).

Multiple linear regression equations were used to predict each subject's judgments on the four rating scales. Analyses of variance indicated that there were no significant sex differences in the patterns of cue utilization. For this reason, data for male and female subjects were combined in subsequent analyses.

The number of times each cue contributed a significant proportion of variance in each subject's four judgments was tabulated. The data for all subjects were then combined to

establish the value of each of the informational cues in predicting the four judgments (see Table 1). By far, the best predictor of subjects' judgments was the amount of beer consumed by the victim. The extent to which the victim had been threatened and the reputation of the alleged assailant were also salient predictors. Surprisingly, the information on the degree of resistance by the victim was the least effective of the nine predictors.

A detailed analysis of the three most frequently employed cues appears in Table 2. These analyses are based on the Beta weights corresponding to each of the three cues for the four questions. The sign of the Beta weights indicates the directionality of the relationship between the informational cues and subjects' judgments. As is evident from Table 2, there was a surprising degree of intersubject consistency in the way cues were related to judgments. These data indicate that the alleged victim was judged more responsible and more willing if she had: (1) consumed more beer; (2) been threatened less for resisting; and (3) if the assailant had not been involved in similar incidents. In each case, the converse was true for judgments of the assailant's responsibility and sanction.

Discussion

These results support and extend previous findings (Kreutzer et al., 1980) which suggested that drinkers are held more, rather than less, responsible for aggressive behavior. In the present study, a rapist and/or his alleged victim were judged more responsible if they had consumed alcohol prior to the incident. Sobell and Sobell (1973) have suggested otherwise--indicating that intoxication is often an excuse for inappropriate behaviors.

It may be that individuals can rationalize their own drunken behaviors; however, it seems unlikely that other members of society are willing to accept this rationalization or to provide them with a shorter prison sentence.

The present findings have implications for the way that people weight various types of information in making judgments of actual rapists and their victims. In the present study, decisions regarding a victim's responsibility and willingness were primarily determined by the victim's alcohol intake. This finding suggests that a woman who drinks is putting herself in a dangerous situation: should she be confronted by a rapist, she is less likely to elicit sympathy from other members of society. In a sense, societal and cultural myths may encourage the potential rapist to select the drinking woman as prey and the local tavern as his natural habitat. Future research should focus on these cultural myths in an effort to determine their relationship to social and legal judgments of rapists and their victims.

The present study yielded several additional surprising findings. Subjects tended to give little consideration to the victim's degree of resistance in arriving at their decisions. Intuitively, it would seem that whether or not a woman resists should have a greater impact on judgments concerning her responsibility and willingness than information about the location of the incident or subsequent pregnancy. It is ironic that whether or not the victim became pregnant--a chance factor--was weighted more heavily than five of the nine informational cues. Also ironic was the fact that alcohol intake of the <u>victim</u>, rather than the <u>assailant</u>, was a primary determinant of responsibility attributions for <u>both</u> assailant and victim. This may again reflect

the unjust tendency to "blame the victim." It is surprising that females, who might potentially find themselves in one of the scenarios depicted, did not differ from males regarding their utilization of these cues.

In conclusion, it appears that people are held more, rather than less, responsible for their inappropriate drunken behavior. Future research efforts should focus on the role played by stereotypes and cultural myths in determining responsibility attributions for rapists and their victims.

Table 1

Number of Significant Cue Utilizations

	Cues	Cue Levels	Total number of significant effects[1]	Cue Rank
1	Victim beer consumption	1-none; 2-3 beers; 3-6 beers; 4-9 beers	184	1
2	Threat to victim	1-no threat; 2-victim walk home; 3-violence	135	2
3	Assailant reputation	1-never raped before; 2-several times; 3-many	129	3
4	Resulting in pregnancy	1-victim not pregnant; 2-victim pregnant	64	4
5	Length of victim/ assailant relationship	1-met recently; 2-4 to 5 weeks; 3-3 to 4 months	56	5
6	Assailant beer consumption	1-none; 2-3 beers; 3-6 beers; 4-9 beers	55	6
7	Location of incident	1-city park; 2-assailant's home	53	7
8	Assailant affiliation	1-orchestra; 2-swim team; 3-hockey team	26	8
9	Victim resistance	1-no attempt; 2-tried to stop assailant	14	9

[1]Totals were obtained by collapsing across all four response scales. The maximum number of significant effects is 4 (number of dependent measures) X 96 (number of subjects) = 384 total possible effects; Significance is based on $p < .05$.

Table 2

Mean R^2 Values and Number of Positive and Negative Significant Cue Utilizations for The Three Most Frequently Employed Cues[1]

Dependent Measure	Mean R^2 Value	Number of Positive/Negative Significant Effects *Victim Beer	Threat	Assailant Reputation
Assailant Responsibility[2]	.48	3/30 (18/3)	35/3	43/0
Victim Responsibility[2]	.51	66/1 (3/8)	1/24	3/14
Assailant Sanction[3]	.50	3/22 (9/4)	36/2	55/0
Victim Willingness[4]	.49	58/1 (4/6)	1/34	2/12
Total		184 (55)	135	129

[1]Positive and negative effects are determined by the sign of the appropriate Beta weights in the regression equations.

[2]The Responsibility scales were coded so that a positive effect indicates more judged responsibility as Victim Beer consumption and Threat increased and as Assailant Reputation became worse.

[3]The Assailant Sanction scale was coded so that a positive effect indicates more judged sanction as Victim Beer consumption and Threat increased and as Assailant Reputation became worse.

[4]The Victim Willingness scale was coded so that a positive effect indicates more judged willingness as Victim Beer consumption and Threat increased and as Assailant Reputation became worse.

*Figures in parentheses denote values for assailant beer cue.

References

Arkkelin, D., Oakley, T., & Mynatt, C. Effects of controllable versus uncontrollable factors on responsibility attributions: A single subject approach. Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 1979, 37(1), 110-115.

Brunswik, E. The conceptual framework of psychology. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1952.

Kreutzer, J.S., Mynatt, C.R., & Markowitz, L. Information about alcohol consumption as a determinant of responsibility attributions. Delivered at American Psychological Association, Montreal 1980 (available from J. Kreutzer, Psychology Department, Bowling Green State University).

Noble, Ernest P. Alcohol and Health (Report No. HE 20.8313:2). Rockville, Maryland: U.S. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare, 1978.

Scroggs, J. Penalties for rape as a function of victim provocativeness, damage, and resistance. Journal of Applied Social Psychology, 1976, 6, 360-368.

Sobell, M.B., & Sobell, L.C. Individualized behavior therapy for alcoholics. Behavior Therapy, 1973, 4, 49-72.